

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ADDIS 02087 191520Z

56

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-11 OMB-01 /077 W
----- 024737

P R 191356Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8224

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 2087

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT ET

SUBJECT: PATRIARCH OF ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH DEPOSED:
EMBASSY COMMENTS

1. PREVIOUS EMBTEL REPORTS THAT THE PATRIACH OF THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, ABUNA TEWOFLOS, HAS BEEN DEPOSED AND IS REPORTED UNDER ARREST. THE DEPT WILL RECALL THAT THE ABUNA HAD BEEN UNDER SOME CONSTRAINT, WHICH WE HAVE LOOSELY TERMED "HOUSE ARREST," FOR A NUMBER OF MONTHS. HIS REMOVAL FROM OFFICE DOES NOT, THEREFORE, COME AS A GREAT SURPRISE.

2. TEWOFLOS HAD LONG BEEN IN DIFFICULTY. MANY AMONG THE FAITHFUL TURNED THEIR BACKS UPON HIS AS IT BECAME CLEAR TO THEM THAT HE WAS ALLOWING HIMSELF TO BE USED BY THE DIRG TO THE LATTER'S PURPOSES. THE CHRISTIAN ELITES DESPISED HIM FOR FAILING TO STAND UP TO THE DIRG TO PROTECT CHURCH INTERESTS-AND, INCIDENTALLY, THEIR OWN. THEIR LOW
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 ADDIS 02087 191520Z

OPINION OF HIM WAS COMPOUNDED BY THEIR DISAPPOINTMENT

IN THE FAILURE OF THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH TO PLAY THE
ROLE OF A COUNTER-POISE TO DIRG AUTHORITY ETHICALLY,
IDEOLOGICALLY, AND, OF COURSE, POLITICALLY. THE
DIRG FOR ITS PART LIKELY VIEWED THE ABUNA, A PILLAR OF
THE OLD ORDER, AS PERSONALLY AND PHILOSOPHICALLY OPPOSED
TO THEM. IT FEARED THE POLITICAL POTENTIAL OF THE CHURCH
VIZ., ITS PRESUMED ABILITY TO ORGANIZE THE FAITHFUL
IN OPPOSITION TO A "PROGRESSIVE" MILITARY LEADERSHIP. THE DIRG SAW
THE PATRIARCH'S PERSONAL VULNERABILITIES, HOWEVER, AND EXPLOITED
THEM FULLY. THE PATRIARCH WAS THREATENED WITH THE DISCLOSURE
OF HIS MANY TRANSGRESSIONS; ALLOWED TO BARGAIN ENDLESSLY TO
SAFEGUARD SOME ELEMENT OF CHURCH PROPERTY AND REVENUE FROM
THE DIRG'S NATIONALIZATION MEASURES; PERMITTED TO RETAIN
HIS PRIVILEGES AND ALLOWED TO HOPE THAT AN ACCOMMODATION
WITH THE NEW AUTHORITY MIGHT YET BE ACHIEVED. MEANWHILE,
THE CHURCH HIERARCHY WAS IN EFFECT NEUTRALIZED AND THE
FAITHFUL WERE ALLOWED TO CONTEMPLATE AND SAVOR THIS SPECTACLE.
WHEN THE PATRIARCH HAD BECOME SUFFICIENTLY DISCREDITED, THE
DIRG BEGAN TO CONSTRAIN HIM AND HAS NOW BROUGHT THIS PROCESS
TO ITS LOGICAL CONCLUSION.

3. IF THE DIRG NOW PROCEEDS TO ALLOW THE HOLY SYNOD TO
SELECT A SUCCESSOR ABUNA MORE OR LESS NORMALLY AND
REASSURES THE FAITHFUL THAT BEYOND SOME OVERDUE
ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS IT DOES NOT INTEND TO INTERFERE
IN DOCTRINAL MATTERS, THE PASSING OF TEWOFLOS WILL LIKELY
GO UNMOURNED. THIS MAY NOT BE A SIMPLE MATTER, HOWEVER,
AS CHRISTIAN ETHIOPIAN ELITES TEND TO ASSOCIATE THEIR
STATUS WITH THEIR CHRISTIANITY. THESE MIDDLE-CLASS ELITES
FEEL MORE THAN EVER UNDER ATTACK BY THE DIRG AT THIS
JUNCTURE AND IT WOULD NOT SURPRISE US SHOULD THEY COME TO
SUSPECT THAT THE DEPOSING OF TEWOFLOS IS ONLY THE NEXT
STEP IN A REVOLUTIONARY MARXIST PROCESS OF DISESTABLISHMENT
AIMED NOT MERELY AT THE CROWN AND A DISCREDITED ABUNA, BUT AT THE
CHURCH AND, ULTIMATELY, AT THEM AS A CLASS.
HUMMEL

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: RELIGIOUS LEADERS, ARRESTS, CHURCH STATE RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: coburnhl
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ADDIS02087
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760062-0645
From: ADDIS ABABA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760237/aaaabfnl.tel
Line Count: 97
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: coburnhl
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22 APR 2004 by greeneet>; APPROVED <10 AUG 2004 by coburnhl>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PATRIARCH OF ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH DEPOSED: EMBASSY COMMENTS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, ET, (ABUNA TEWOFLOS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006